

Design Arts Program, National Endowment for the Arts

Spring 1991

## Defending the Public Trust in Sacramento

**T**hunderstruck" aptly describes the impact Sacramento mayor Anne Rudin's presentation had on participants at the October 1989 Mayors' Institute on City Design (MICD). Fur flew as design professionals and mayors resoundingly agreed that the protection of the public trust was not the domain of architects and developers. It's the province and the sacred duty of mayors and city governments.

Mayor Rudin set this keg afire with her presentation on four developers' proposals solicited by the Community Redevelopment Agency (CRA) for "Lot A," a city-owned parcel of land (currently occupied by a two-story parking structure) located four blocks from the California state capitol. The city's request for proposals gave few guidelines for development except that it be mixed-use. All four proposals were similar in nature—ranging from 34 to 51 stories tall, hard by the capitol building, which rises 210 feet.

Except for one 28-story structure, deemed "Darth Vaderesque" by some local critics, the prevailing city building height has been ten stories. In the past, the city council has decided not to impose height limits, partly to encourage downtown development.

At the institute, the idea of a skyscraper impeding the view to or shadowing a capitol building was elevated to the status of a national design emergency—a breach of the public trust that would deprive citizens, of California and the nation as a whole, of their historical and cultural heritage.

Regardless of this critical input, Sacramento's city council approved one of the proposals (34 stories in height), and Mayor Rudin expressed

that the city was too far along to call it to a halt. The CRA reports that the Lot A project is now in the development stage, with groundbreaking scheduled for late 1991.

In a fall 1990 interview, Mayor Rudin explained that the reaction at the Mayors' Institute took her by surprise. She feels, however, that the input was invaluable. "On returning, I felt a deep sense of obligation to follow through on the recommendations. I was totally surprised by the focus however—that since we were a state capital we had to give special consideration to design." She added, "I don't think we're doing enough."

But in the year since the institute, the mayor has taken the lead to steward quality design in the city. In November 1989, she and state assemblyman Lloyd Connelly proposed state legislation to set a height limit for the capitol area, (a state law is needed to guide the area's development since state buildings are exempt from city guidelines) but such legislation will take several years to take effect.

Equally important, the mayor also worked through her planning department. The department studied and developed criteria to address the height issue, and a temporary emergency height ordinance was passed for the two block area around the capitol.

Though Mayor Rudin admits that

height limits would affect property values, she maintains, "You have to look at what it means to the city. Height limits *are* important. We have to be thinking of the physical impact of development on air quality, the environment and other basic concerns."

Rudin believes height limits should be formulated as part of an overall "city carrying capacity" determining the level of development appropriate for Sacramento's downtown. "If building goes unchecked," she explained, "I think you reach a point of diminishing returns—and this is not a decision that can be made in terms of a specific building, but looking at overall development. There needs to be a calculation of the total square footage supported—that so many square feet of development generate so many pedestrians, so many cars, and the need for parking, city services, fire and police. . ."

**S**acramento's planning director Michael Davis emphasized, "The mayor's attendance at the institute has been terrific for planning. The mayor and the legislature can be incredibly important to set the tone for development." Despite the moderate level of power vested in the Sacramento mayor's office—only one vote on the city council and no veto power over council decisions—Rudin has "helped set a process in motion," according to Davis. Issues now being publicly addressed have been long-time concerns of the planning department—grappling with the skyline vis-a-vis downtown and the state capitol. "When a mayor chooses to exercise leadership," Davis stated, "it helps move the policy debate along. The same political landscape exists, but [now] the will to wade through it exists as well."

The city's sign control measures are

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*California capitol gains spotlight as proposed building vies for a place in skyline.*



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one example. Davis explained, "Since the mayor returned, the city has drafted one of the most stringent sign control measures in the nation:

Mayor Anne Rudin

no signs are allowed above 100 feet from street level. The measure ties into the effort to make the streetscape pedestrian-friendly. If you pulled that level of investment from the tops of buildings, property owners will put it into the pedestrian level. It has been shown elsewhere that this will help get a more interesting street level."

Sacramento's experience with Lot A—the results a city gets when clear design requirements are not stated—has spawned a new approach for development. Davis described the process now in use on a major development planned for a 240-plus-acre parcel of railroad-owned land. (The property equals some 68 city blocks; by comparison, the downtown is 66 blocks.) A two-year, \$2.5 million dollar joint planning exercise between the city and the railroad is now underway, including community workshops to generate ideas and dialogue. Davis called the process "atypical—not where the developers' architects give a proposal . . . and the city tears it apart. Instead, the idea is to . . . establish one set of working assumptions for development." This joint planning effort is a coherent alternative to the city's passive involvement in Lot A.

Clearly, Rudin is riding the crest of a wave to make well-planned development part and parcel of her city. Her keynote address at MICD: West 1990 bore this out. She illustrated how every city department has a role in city design—parks, transportation, public works, and others not typically associated with design—and defined the impact of each on the city's physical elements—its median strips, entrances, parks and the like.

As a result of her involvement in MICD, Mayor Rudin has assumed the role of defender of the public trust in terms of design and quality of life—vigilantly seeking to avoid the diminishing returns of poorly planned development. ■

## Baltimore Bridge Plan a Public Works Model

**H**ow do you mix art and engineering to make your city more attractive? In Baltimore, the answer is a bridge-painting scheme that transforms routine maintenance into public art.

The bridge painting plan, developed by artist Stan Edmister in cooperation with the City Planning and Transportation Departments under a grant from the NEA Design Arts Program, puts people in touch with everyday elements of the city by highlighting their structure and function through color. "Infrastructure Art," as Edmister calls it, allows interaction between the artist and the public in a way not possible in a museum or gallery setting, while adding something positive to the environment.

Harry McCullough, City Transportation Chief saw the value of the idea, saying recently, "Bridges for so long have been just utilitarian. This gives them some pizzazz and the public reaction to that will be good." At the opening of the Guilford Avenue Bridge, the crowd bore out his assessment. A festive crowd heard Mayor Kurt Schmoke (MICD Spring 1988), say "This collaboration between artist and engineer, the NEA and the City, Transportation and Planning, is a model for outstanding public works. This bridge adds something to the neighborhood and the city that we can all be proud of."



According to highway officials, the cost difference in using different colors is minimal and in fact, because of the added attention to detail by the painting contractors, actually results in better quality control. In the Guilford Avenue Bridge, cleaning and painting represented only about three percent of the total rehabilitation cost.

Jack Freedman, bridge engineer for the State of Maryland said his department has studied "what can be done to make bridges more aesthetically pleasing" for a few years. He added that, with respect to Edmister's project, his department is "open minded. We'll take a look at it and if it looks good. . . we'll take advantage of it."

Too often artists and designers are asked to develop artworks as an afterthought. Here in Baltimore, through the time it took to gain the necessary acceptance and approvals, the project resulted in true collaboration, and the artist was not only given important responsibility but also the respect of others involved, from the highway officials to the paint crew. ■



Allan B. Jacobs illustrates a point for Brownsville, Texas, Mayor Ygnacio "Nacho" Garza at MICD VIII in Charlottesville, Virginia, April 1990.

**MICD VIII**  
**April 1990**  
**University of**  
**Virginia**

**RESOURCE TEAMS**

**Joan Abrahamson**  
urbanist/lawyer

**Michael Buckley**  
architect/real estate developer

**Robert Campbell**  
architect/architecture critic

**Richard C. Collins**  
urban/environmental planner

**Allan B. Jacobs**  
architect/urban planner

**Nellie Longworth**  
preservationist

**Randy McAusland**  
Design Arts Program Director

**John Parsons**  
landscape architect

**Mayor Joe Riley** *keynote*  
Charleston, SC

**Jaquelin T. Robertson**  
architect/urban designer

**MAYORS AND DESIGN PROBLEMS**

**Mayor Ignacio "Nacho" Garza, Brownsville, TX:** main street revitalization through facade renovations and street improvements

**Mayor Daniel Kemmis, Missoula, MT:** design and placement of a pedestrian bridge over a river in the heart of downtown

**Mayor Karen Vialle, Tacoma, WA:** revitalization of a waterfront which was both rundown and inaccessible, and its link to city and commercial properties

**Mayor Lila Cockrell, San Antonio, TX:** relationship of a new stadium to downtown and adjacent neighborhoods

**Mayor Thomas Ryan, Rochester, NY:** reducing the visual and psychological impact of an underutilized loop expressway

**Mayor Lee Robinson, Macon, GA:** renovation of a train station that is physically set apart from downtown and exploring potential uses for the structure as well as ways to tie it back to the downtown core

**Mayor Ray Wieczorek, Manchester, NH:** redevelopment of the historic millyard area, emphasizing mixed-use and balancing activity in order not to draw activity away from downtown

**Mayor Dave Musante, Northampton, MA:** potential uses for and redevelopment of an abandoned state hospital and its extensive grounds, which the city is in the position to plan or influence

**MICD: South**  
**April 1990**  
**Tulane**  
**University**

**Catherine Brown**  
landscape architect

**Robert Davis**  
real estate developer

**Ronald Filson**  
architect

**Joan Goody**  
architect

**Florence Ladd**  
urban sociologist

**Grover Mouton**  
architect/artist

**Barton Phelps**  
architect

**Mayor Vince Schoemehl**  
St. Louis, MO *keynote*

**Mario di Valmarana**  
preservationist

**Deborah Whitehurst**  
arts administrator

**Mayor Richard Arrington, Birmingham, AL:** revitalization of a major mid-town avenue to provide visual and physical link to the mix of uses it intersects

**Mayor Keith Ingram, West Memphis, AR:** creation of a comprehensive masterplan, emphasizing Main Street and concentrating development around city hall

**Mayor Louise Gardner, Jefferson City, MO:** establishing a public park providing direct access to the river from the downtown area

**Mayor David Armstrong, Natchez, MS:** management of increasing tourism without destroying the city's historic scale and character

**Mayor Martha Wood, Winston-Salem, NC:** plans for a downtown criminal holding facility that would re-use existing industrial buildings

**Mayor Robert Powell, Monroe, LA:** riverfront revitalization, by means of implementing an overall cultural plan, including a new museum

**Mayor Christine Moreno, North Miami, FL:** maintaining natural areas and ecological diversity while allowing some development

**Mayor Charles Farmer, Jackson, TN:** the need for a new city hall and the impact of a proposed downtown bypass on commercial activity

**MICD IX**  
**October 1990**  
**University of**  
**Virginia**

**RESOURCE TEAMS**

**Joan Abrahamson**  
 urbanist/lawyer

**Susan Child**  
 landscape architect

**Tony Hiss**  
 urbanist/author

**Jerold Kayden**  
 land use lawyer

**John L. Kriken**  
 architect/urban designer

**Genevieve Ray**  
 preservationist/urbanist

**Mayor Joe Riley** *keynote*  
 Charleston, SC

**Jaquelin T. Robertson**  
 architect/urban designer

**Mark Schuster**  
 urban planner

**Carroll William Westfall**  
 architectural historian

**MAYORS AND DESIGN PROBLEMS**

**Mayor Tom Ed McHugh, Baton Rouge, LA:** revitalization of residential areas near downtown core

**Mayor Joyce Savocchio, Erie, PA:** development of a single historic block into an arts complex

**Mayor Paul Helmke, Fort Wayne, IN:** creation of a public park on previously developed land in the downtown floodplain

**Mayor Thomas Barnes, Gary, IN:** waterfront redevelopment, proposed location for new airport, and downtown revitalization

**Mayor Gerald Helmholtz, Grand Rapids, MI:** redevelopment and revitalization of a downtown street

**Mayor Mike Dow, Mobile, AL:** hotel development to support a new convention center, either by renovating existing historic hotel or new construction

**Mayor Brad Olch, Park City, UT:** renovation of historic high school as arts and cultural center and redevelopment of surrounding area

**Mayor Tom Volgy, Tucson, AZ:** visual unification of an emerging downtown arts district

**MICD: West**  
**November**  
**1990**  
**University of**  
**California,**  
**Berkeley**

**Robert Campbell**  
 architect/architecture critic

**Randy Hester**  
 landscape architect

**Allan Jacobs**  
 architect/urban planner

**Donlyn Lyndon**  
 architect/urban designer

**William Morrish**  
 architect/urban designer

**Sharon Lee Polledri**  
 architect/real estate developer

**Mayor Anne Rudin** *keynote*  
 Sacramento, CA

**Don Stull**  
 architect

**Greg Tung**  
 architect/urban designer

**Mayor Edith Henningsgaard, Astoria, OR:** waterfront development and its relationship to downtown—balancing tourism and local needs

**Mayor Nancy Flemming, Eureka, CA:** development of underutilized waterfront land and its relationship to downtown

**Mayor Debra Ertel, Federal Way, WA:** development of large land parcel adjacent to strip shopping mall and residential neighborhood as potential site for civic center and master plan

**Mayor Carol Whiteside, Modesto, CA:** coordination of gateway design alternatives with land use plan

**Mayor W.R. "Bob" Holcomb, San Bernardino, CA:** exploring the merits of historic building restoration when no viable economic uses for the structure have been found

**Mayor Sheila Lodge, Santa Barbara, CA:** city's role in development of last undeveloped land parcel adjacent to waterfront

**Mayor Jack Doyle, Santee, CA:** development of the city's Town Center Plan, a regional shopping center proposed for a 700 acre site in the middle of the city

**Schedule of**  
**Upcoming**  
**Institutes**

**April 4 - 7, 1991**

**April 25 - 28, 1991**

**May 9 - 12, 1991**

**October 27 - 30, 1991**

**MICD Northeast:** Massachusetts Institute of Technology, Cambridge, MA

**MICD X:** University of Virginia, Charlottesville, VA

**MICD Midwest:** University of Minnesota, Minneapolis, MN

**MICD XI:** University of Virginia, Charlottesville, VA



*Mayor Joseph P. Riley, Jr. delivers opening address at National Trust meeting in Charleston, South Carolina.*

## National Trust Invites MICD Alumni to Speak

**T**he National Trust for Historic Preservation invited sixteen Mayors' Institute on City Design (MICD) alumni, both mayors and resource people, to participate in a special educational track at its 44th Annual Conference. The meeting was held October 17 - 19, 1990, in Charleston, South Carolina. Mayor Joseph P. Riley, Jr. delivered the opening plenary address to a crowd of approximately 2,200 preservationists from around the country.

The MICD alumni were panelists for a track entitled "Design, Conservation, and Community Needs: The Mayor's Perspective." The program was divided into four sessions focusing on the topical areas of private investment, public investment, housing, and natural resources, and concluded with a final round-table discussion. Each mayor presented either an ongoing or completed project from their city focusing on the mayor's role in the design process. Many of the mayors' case studies updated ones initially presented at the Mayors' Institute. Alumni resource people acted as moderators for each panel.

In the final round-table, Burlington Mayor Pete Clavelle affirmed the needs of his colleagues by asking for cooperation from the preservation community, "Where the historic pre-

servationists can be very helpful is to coalesce with those other activists who are attempting to balance community needs and deal with these issues. Historic preservationists are . . . viewed, I think, as a special interest group. The vision of many is that it's a rather elite group. In Vermont, we've had some success . . . creating a coalition

of historic preservationists, environmentalists and affordable housing advocates. If we can create that coalition within our communities, working with elected officials, then we can bring about community change."

Conference participants adopted the "Charleston Principles," for community conservation. The Trust consulted MICD alumni and other advisory groups on the preliminary list of principles prior to adoption. The Trust hopes to see them implemented, as a matter of policy, by local governments across the country. The

Trust issued the final version (see below) with the following statement, "We call on local leaders to adopt and act on these principles in order to improve their citizens' quality of life, increase their economic well-being, and enhance their community's heritage and beauty."

The National Trust conference was the first time an MICD alumni group has met formally. Mayors present were: Victor Ashe, Knoxville, TN; John Bullard, New Bedford, MA; Bud Clark, Portland, OR; Pete Clavelle, Burlington, VT; former mayor Jan Coggeshall, Galveston, TX; Juanita Crabb, Binghamton, NY; Joe Daddona, Allentown, PA; Kane Ditto, Jackson, MS; Thomas Hart, Davenport, IA; former mayor George Latimer, St. Paul, MN; and Joe Riley, Charleston, SC. Resource people were Catherine Brown, landscape architect and urban designer; Robert Campbell, architect and critic; Joan Goody, architect; Donlyn Lyndon, architect and urban designer; and Grover Mouton, architect and artist. Joan Abrahamson, Adele Chatfield-Taylor and Jaquelin Robertson were also in attendance, but did not participate in the panel sessions. ■

### "CHARLESTON PRINCIPLES"

- Principle I: Identify historic places, both architectural and natural, that give the community its special character and that can aid its future well-being.
- Principle II: Adopt the preservation of historic places as a goal of planning for land use, economic development, housing for all income levels, and transportation.
- Principle III: Create organizational, regulatory, and incentive mechanisms to facilitate preservation, and provide leadership to make them work.
- Principle IV: Develop revitalization strategies that capitalize on the existing value of historic residential and commercial neighborhoods and properties, and provide well designed affordable housing without displacing existing residents.
- Principle V: Ensure that policies and decisions on community growth and development respect a community's heritage and enhance overall livability.
- Principle VI: Demand excellence in design for new construction and in stewardship of historic properties and places.
- Principle VII: Use a community's heritage to educate citizen's off all ages and to build civic pride.
- Principle VIII: Recognize the cultural diversity of communities and empower a diverse constituency to acknowledge, identify, and preserve America's cultural and physical resources.

Mayor **Karen Vialle** returned to **Tacoma, WA**, following her participation in MICD Spring 1990, and proposed that the city establish an Urban Design Section within the city's Planning and Development Services Department. The proposal received unanimous approval from the city council. The new section deals with issues affecting design and aesthetics in the city and is currently working on design plans for several commercial districts. In the near future, the section will begin to develop urban design standards for the city. An urban design plan will be prepared to be part of the city's comprehensive plan which will address both design policies and guidelines. Mayor Vialle, with other members of the city council, is also exploring the idea of establishing a citizen design commission for Tacoma.



The city of **Allentown, PA** has recently opened a small business incubator and light manufacturing and warehouse space in an abandoned Mack Truck machine shop and warehouse. Through the city's involvement, not only have these prominent buildings been revitalized, but the city, which is built out, has gained valuable office and industrial space. According to Mayor **Joe Daddona** (MICD Spring 1987), because the stripped and abandoned buildings were highly visible, the project had both economic and symbolic value for the city.



Mayor **Charles Farmer** (MICD: South 1990) returned to **Jackson, TN** urging his city council to fund a proposal for developing a master plan for downtown. An editorial in the *Jackson Sun* shortly after his return supported this initiative, "The best thing about the proposal . . . is that it puts the horse before the cart. . . If we redo downtown right, we can attract more developers, businesses and shoppers to the city's core. That would be good for property values, tax revenues, tourism and the city's image. . . " The city has hired an urban design firm and the project is now underway.



Mayor **Vince Schoemehl's** (MICD Spring 1988) dedication to quality urban design in **St. Louis** recently made him a recipient of a distinguished Honorary Membership from the American Institute of Architects (AIA). The award is based on nomination by the local AIA chapter and is given by the national organization. It is the highest honor that the architectural profession grants to those outside of the practicing community.



After Mayor **Robert Powell's** participation in MICD: South 1990, **Monroe, LA** applied for and received an NEA grant to develop an urban design master plan for the riverfront and a new cultural complex. Through public workshops with a citizen task force, the planning department, the downtown development and the historical and cultural agencies, a design team will draft redevelopment proposals for the city core. Implementation could begin in late 1991.

At Mayor **Lila Cockrell's** (MICD Spring 1990) initiation, **San Antonio, TX**, has taken action toward developing an urban design plan for the city by starting an Urban Design Leadership Institute, a series of community workshops organized by the Planning and Arts and Cultural Affairs departments, involving city employees, design professionals, and local business and neighborhood leaders. The initial focus of the institute is a series of guest speakers from around the country who are professionals in fields relating to urban design. In opening the first session, Mayor Cockrell stated, "Urban design is a subjective term and by means of this institute we, as a body, will come to learn and develop a consensus on what it means to San Antonio and our particular ways of life." Following the lecture series, the city (and its citizens) will set an urban design agenda based on insights gained through the forums and workshops. Funding for this effort was provided in part by an NEA grant.



Following up on Mayor **Victor Ashe's** case study presentation from MICD Spring 1989, **Knoxville, TN**, has completed an urban design masterplan for seven miles of riverfront in the city's heart. In order to insure that the plan would be implemented, the mayor invited all interested parties to get involved at the project's outset. This included the Corps of Engineers, D.O.T., the University of Tennessee and other property owners. The plan focuses on many issues, from new detailing on the river bridges to areas for entertainment and recreation. The highway that currently separates downtown from the riverfront is being converted into a parkway.

#### PHOTO CREDITS:

Page 1 - California capitol, *Sacramento Convention & Visitors Bureau*

Page 2 - Mayor Rudin, *Sirlin Photographers*; Baltimore bridge, *not credited*; Allan Jacobs and Mayor Garza, *Daniel Grogan Photography*

Page 5 - Mayor Riley, *Daniel Grogan Photography*

#### CORRECTION:

In the last issue of *CITY DESIGN*, William Morrish's name was spelled incorrectly in both the list of participants and the credit for his drawing.

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